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Primary Source Interpretation

The document, “I Look For You” was a poem written by Solomon Ibn Gabirol. This poem was later translated into English by Peter Cole in 2001. This poem was about how Solomon Ibn Gabirol was in love with a girl and the insecurities he had while he loved her. Solomon Ibn Gabirol wrote many poems throughout his lifetime.

The target audience for this poem was to the girl that he loved. He wanted her to know that he loved her flaws and everything else about her. This girl was his target audience. It was unsure who the girl actually was because nothing was ever said about Gabirol having a girlfriend. She was not perfect because Solomon said, “before your vastness I come confused and afraid for you to see the thoughts of my heart” (Gabirol 5-8). This meant that one moment she was fine but the next she was very intense either with anger or sadness and Gabirol had no idea why. Due to the girl’s bursts of intensity this made Gabirol sometimes scared to show this girl how he truly felt about her.

Another reason as to why Gabirol could be afraid at times to show this girl his true feelings was because she could be of a higher social class than him. This may make him feel insecure fearing that she did not feel the same way towards him. He felt not worthy enough to be with this girl. This was also true because Gabirol said later in the poem, “What could the heart and tongue compose, or spirit’s strength within me to suit you?” (Gabirol 9-12). The author said this because he did not think that he could fully satisfy this girl with just how he felt and what he says. He thought that he needed more than that in order to fully win over this girl.But then in the next two lines Gabirol realized that what he was currently doing made the girl happy which was why he said, “But song soothes you” (Gabirol 13). The “song,” otherwise known as his personality and morals, made the girl feel content with Gabirol which made Gabirol feel better about himself.

But, Gabirol knew that it would be hard for him to leave this relationship. This was because the author said in the beginning of the poem, “I look for you early, my rock and my refuge” (Gabirol 1-2). The author said how the girl was his number-one support system in his life which could easily be true because he was an orphan growing up. This girl being his support system did make it that much harder for him to leave this relationship that he was not happy with at times. Leaving could be hard because Gabirol had no family to support him and be there for him. But overall, the author claimed that as long as she kissed him with meaning, then he would always stay. He claimed this by saying, “I’ll give you praise to your being as long as your breath-in-me moves” (Gabirol 14-16). This showed how he felt that a kiss could determine all feelings for another person. This showed Gabirol’s philosophy about love. He did believe in love. He proved this in this poem through how he believed that the feeling of a kiss meant more to him than the girl he loved intensity. But he may not realize that the people who gave the most meaningful kisses could also be the biggest backstabbers.

This poem showed how society back then was based on social hierarchy and if a relationship consisted of two people not from the same social class, then the person of the lower social class felt inferior to the person of the higher social class. This was proven when Gabirol claimed through questioning, “What could the heart and tongue compose, or spirit’s strength within me to suit you?” (Gabirol 9-12). He did not feel worthy enough for her because of his lack of resources as well as his social class. The author played the role of being a dependent man on a girl which was bad because if she did not truly love him then his entire world would fall apart.